

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LIMA 00537 192319Z  
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-01 IO-13 HA-05 CIAE-00  
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01  
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INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY  
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AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY  
USSOUTHCOM PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 0537

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PERP PE EC  
SUBJ: PERU-ECUADOR BORDER INCIDENTS; PRELIMINARY COMMENTS

REF: (A) LIMA 0514 (B) QUITO 0343

1. COMMUNIQUE ON RECENT ECUADOR-PERU BORDER INCIDENTS ISSUED EVENING OF JAN 18 HAS PROMPTED SPECULATION FROM VARIOUS OBSERVERS ABOUT GOP'S MOTIVES IN PUBLICIZING THESE INCIDENTS. FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE CONFIRMS, AS IMPLIED PARA 2 OF COMMUNIQUE (REF A) THAT MINISTRY WAS ALREADY STUDYING POSSIBLE APPROACH TO ECUADOR ABOUT CONTROLLING SUCH CONFLICTS WHEN JAN 17 AND 18 INCIDENTS OCCURRED. HE IMPLIED THAT PERUVIAN MILITARY THEN PUSHED FOR A PROMPT PROTEST DESPITE SOME APPARENT MISGIVINGS WITHIN THE MINISTRY ABOUT GOING PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE.

2. ECUADOREAN EMBASSY SOURCE PREDICTABLY DISPUTES FACTS AS PRESENTED BY GOP AS TO INCIDENTS OF JAN 10, 17 AND 18. HE CLAIMED PERUVIAN TROOPS ATTACKED ECUADOREAN TROOPS WITHIN ECUADOR JAN 17 AND FIRED ON ECUADOREAN EVACUATION HELICOPTER JAN 18. HE  
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REITERATED ASSERTION MADE BY AYALA (PARA 5, REF B) THAT GOP INITIALLY DENIED THAT MAN KILLED IN JAN 10 INCIDENT WAS PERUVIAN SOLDIER BUT RATHER A BANDIT OR GUERRILLA USING A PERUVIAN UNIFORM. ECUADOREANS QUIETLY "ACCEPTED" EXPLANATION AND RETURNED REMAINS. THE SOURCE INDICATED MORE CONCERN ABOUT THE MANNER IN WHICH THE GOP CHOSE TO HANDLE THE LATEST CONFLICTS THAN ABOUT THE INCIDENTS THEMSELVES, WHICH HE CLAIMED HAVE BEEN

GOING ON FOR YEARS AND PROBABLY ARE INEVITABLE IN THE UNDEMARCATED AREA. HE BELIEVES (BUT ADMITS IT TO BE PERSONAL SPECULATION) THAT GOP TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A PUBLIC CASE AGAINST ECUADOR FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS. INTERESTINGLY, HE DID NOT SEE IT AS MEANS TO BREAK OFF BI-LATERAL TALKS ON ACCESS TO THE AMAZON AND DISMISSED AS SILLY, RUMORS OF A "PLOT" BY CHILE AND ECUADOR AGAINST PERU RELATING TO THE BEAGLE CHANNEL DISPUTE.

3. INDEED, IT IS RATHER WIDELY BELIEVED IN LIMA THAT THE GOP'S RESPONSE IS SOMEHOW LINKED TO GOVERNMENT'S INTERNAL PROBLEMS DESPITE THE FACT THAT AS YET THERE IS NO HARD EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THIS THESIS. ON THE OTHER HAND, HOWEVER, THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT THE GOP IS MOUNTING AN ONGOING CAMPAIGN AGAINST ECUADOR. FOREIGN MINISTER DE LA PUENTE'S COMMENTS TO THE PRESS ABOUT THE POVEDA-MORALES BERMUDEZ CONVERSATION WERE BALANCED, SEEMINGLY CONCILIATORY AND DESIGNED TO COOL DOWN THE MATTER.

4. COMMENT: IT MAY WELL BE THAT GOP STRONG PUBLIC REACTION TO INCIDENTS (REGARDLESS OF WHO WAS AT FAULT) STEMMED IN PART FROM PRESIDENT'S NEED TO TRY TO STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION WITH HIS OWN MILITARY LEADERSHIP AT A CRITICAL TIME OF FINANCIAL CRISIS AND POTENTIAL LABOR UNREST AND THAT THIS CONSIDERATION OUTWEIGHED POVEDA'S REQUEST THAT THE PERUVIANS NOT PUBLISH THE COMMUNIQUE AND KEEP MATTER ON "CONFIDENTIAL" LEVEL. WE HAVE CONFIRMED THAT THE COMMUNIQUE WAS OFFICIALLY ISSUED 2-3 HOURS AFTER POVEDA'S PERSONAL CALL TO MORALES BERMUDEZ.  
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SHLAUDEMAN

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
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